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Correspondence With Philander C. Knox

Assistant Secretary of State (1909-1913)

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Letter From Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson to Philander C. Knox, March 10, 1911

Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson

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March 10, 1911.

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Herewith the notes on Cuban affairs. I am afraid you will be appalled at their being so voluminous, but I think you can find what you want to know without a too tedious perusal of them.

Yesterday, just before the President left he sent for me. General Wood was there also. The Mexican Ambassador had just been at the White House and had asked the President whether we would permit Mexican troops to cross our territory to go to protect the Colorado River works. The President asked me what I thought and I advised against giving the permission on the grounds that, (1) For considerations of domestic politics it would be inexpedient because it could be siezed upon as indicating a too-great favoring of the Government of Mexico, and (2) Because the country to be traversed was a hot bed of sympathizers with the insurrection who might cause some disagreeable incident. The President decided to decline the request, and by his direction I afterwards saw the Mexican Ambassador and gave the President's answer, on grounds of its being contrary to the best interests of both countries, etc.

I asked the President whether there was any particular point of view he wished encouraged on the part of the press in regard to the maneuvers, etc. He said the Department was doing very well in that regard, and did not indicate that he desired any special point of view encouraged, except that the theory of maneuvers, as one element, was to be insisted upon.

I also asked the President whether he did not think the present time opportune for pressing upon the Government of Mexico a number of unsettled matters. He directed that such matters be called to their attention, but added that he did not wish at this moment to do anything particularly embarrassing to the Mexican Government.

We are making representations on three or four really outrageous cases and are preparing a note verbale covering all outstanding matters. It seems wise to have this record made for future use at least.

Simply from the point of view of the President's own interests, I have personally felt some anxiety lest the press should fail promptly to shake down into a logical attitude toward the maneuvers and their bearings, and I, myself, believe that it would have been better to make no bones of it and to let it be understood as a matter of course that we wanted adequate troops within reach in case of some unlooked-for eventuality involving violence to American and foreign life

and

and property; that we also needed troops so disposed for the enforcement of the neutrality laws and the principles involved; and, that this was done suddenly instead of in the routine manner because the President wished by a sudden movement to try out the army and the General Staff and thus to answer the recent scathing criticism of the efficiency of the army.

So far as I can make out, the Department of State received "favored nation treatment", for I gather that none of the Cabinet were really consulted about this sudden action.

I hope you are enjoying Palm Beach in spite of irritating circumstances and that these things are not spoiling your holiday. Everything is going very quietly and smoothly here.

My wife has bronchitis and a little fever and the doctor last night urged that we immediately go to Aiken. I shall be back here Tuesday morning anyhow, leaving her there if she is not quite recovered.

Please give my homages and kindest regards to Mrs. Knox and my warm regards to your son, and believe me, always,

Yours very sincerely,

The Honorable P. C. Knox,
The Secretary of State,
Palm Beach, Florida.